

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ORM-02 /078 W

-----043928 222328Z /44

R 222145Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6861

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 4630

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM GT

SUBJ: COMMENT ON ARA/CEN DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

REF: STATE 162645

DRAFT STRIKES US AS FINE JOB OF PEICING TOGETHER THE VARIOUS STRANDS OF THE GUATEMALAN RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS ANDSITS BACKDROP. WHAT FOLLOWS ARE SUGGESTED CHANGES OR ADDITTIONS, MOST OF THEM RELATIVELY MINOR, IN INTEREST OF PRECISION, CLARITY, AND FLAVOR, SUGGESTED REVISIONS ARE KEYED TO DRAFT.

A-1. ALTHOUGH GUATEMALA HAS HAD DURING MANY PERIODS OF ITS HISTORY A HIGH LEVEL OF VIOLENCE (BOTH PERSONAL AND POLITICAL), THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED REDUCTION UNDER THE LAUGERUD ADMINISTRATION OF THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE AS COMPARED WITH THE PREVIOUS REGIME.

2. DURING THE 1966-1972 PERIOD, GUATEMALA WAS PLUNGED INTO ONE OF ITS BLOODIEST INTERNAL CONFLICTS. RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNIST GUERRILLAS LAUNCHED A CUBAN-STYLE INSURGENCY AGAINST A FREELY ELECTED GOVERNMENT. THAT ADMINISTRATION AND THE ONE WHICH FOLLOWED WERE SUBSTANTIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN SUPPRESSING THIS INSRUGENCY, PRINCIPALLY BY HARSH COUNTER-GUERRILLA AND COUNTER-TERRORIST ACTIVITIES, WHICH INCLUDED EXTR-LEGAL VIOLENCE.

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3. SECOND SENTENCE: THE RECORD IS NOT UNBLEMISHED --THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT OFFICIALS OF THEPRESENT ADMIN-ISTRATION ORDERED AT LEAST SEVERAL KILLINGS OF SUSPECTED TERRORISTS.

4. INSURGENCY REMAINS A CONTINUING PROBLEM DESPITE ALL

THE GOVERNMENT'S MAJOR SECURITY CONCERN. THE EGP HAS DEMONSTRATED A CAPABILITY TO STRIKE IN STRENGTH ALMOST ANYWHERE IN GUATEMALA AND HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR A SERIES OF VIOLENT ACTIONS, INCLUDING ASSASSINATIONS OF POLITICAL FIGURES AND OF MILITARY AND SECURITY PERSONNEL, AND KIDNAPPINGS AND KILLINGS OF BUSINESSMEN, MANAGERS, AND LANDHOLDERS.

5. SECOND SENTENCE: THERE ARE SIGNS THAT VILENCE, AFTER A PERIOD OF RELATIVE CALM, MAY BE ON THE UPSURGE AGAIN AS THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS APPROACH.

6. NO SUGGESTIONS.

7. NO SUGGESTIONS.

8. ALTHOUGH SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN LIVING STANDARDS AND SIN THE EXPANSION OF A MIDDLE CLASS HAVE BEEN MADE OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS, PARTICULARLY FOR THE URBAN INDUSTRIAL AND SERVICE WORKER, SEVERE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES STILL EXIST IN GUATEMALA. THE TAX SYSTEM IS REGRESSIVE IN MANY RESPECTS, POORLY ENFORCED, AND THE RATE OF TAX COLLECTION AS A PERCENTAGE OF GNP IS THE SECOND LOWEST IN THE HEMISPHERE. PROXIMITY TO GUATEMALA CITY OR TO THE DEPARTMENT SEATS LARGELY DETERMINES THE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SERVICES. AS ELSEWHERE IN LATIN AMERICA, CORRUPTION IS FAIRLY WIDESPREAD AMONG

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GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY LESS THAN UNDER THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION.

B-1 SINCE 1954, THE U.S. HAS BEEN ACTIVELY AND INTIMATELY INVOLVED WITH GUATEMALA. ALTHOUGH OUR RHETORIC AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE HAVE CONSTANTLY TLY SOUGHT TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND REFORM, SOME CRITICS SEE US AS DEFENDING THE STATUS QUO AND PROPPING UP CONSERVATIVE REGIMES. HOWEVER ILL-FOUNDED THIS PERCEPTION OF U.S. INTENTIONS, IT IS NO CLEAR THAT BOTH OUR INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE ARE DECLINING.

2. NO SUGGESTIONS.

3. ... AND BISITS BY U.N. AMBASSADOR YOUNG, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECREATRY LUERS, TREASURY SECRETARY BLUMENTHAL, AND EXIM PRESIDNET MOORE. ...

4. ... WE HAVE NO MAJOR STRATEGIC INTEREST IN GUATEMALA...

5. AS THE ELECTORAL PERIOD BEGINS, THE LEFTIST EXTREMISTS HAVE ALREADY INCREASED THEIR LEVEL OF URBAN TERRORISM. IN ADDITION, PURELY CRIMINAL BANDS HAVE ATTEMPTED RECENTLY TO CARRY OUT SEVERAL KIDNPAPPINGS, ONE RESULTING IN THE

DEATH OF A SON OF A PROMINENT BUSINESSMAN. AS A
RESULT, CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS HAVE, ACCORDING TO INTELLIGENCE
REPORTS, BROUGHT PRESSURE ON PRESIDENT LAUGERUD TO ENGAGE IN
OR CONDONE EXTRA-LEGAL ACTION AGAINST ACTUAL OR SUSPECTED
TERRORISTS AND CRIMINALS.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6862

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GUATEMALA 4630

SO FAR, PRESIDENT LAUGERUD HAS RESISTED THESE PRESSURES,
BUT RIGHTIST GROUPS ARE THREATENING COUNTER-ACTION.
WE BELIEVE THAT PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S EFFORTS TO
MAINTAIN A RELATIVELY MODERATE STANCE ARE PREFERABLE TO
INCREASING EXTRA-LEGAL ACTION. A POLICY OF MORE EMPHATIC
CRITICISM DIRECTED AGAINST GUATEMALA MIGHT WELL CUT INTO
LAUGERUD'S MANEUVERING ROOM AND FORCE HIM TO MOVE FURTHER
TO THE RIGHT. IF WE USE QUIET DIPLOMACY TO ENCOURAGE
PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S EFFORTS TO ENSURE OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN
RIGHTS AND A FAIR ELECTION IN 1978, WE MAKE IT EASIER FOR
HIM TO RESPOND POSITIVELY AND IMPROVE THE CHANCES THAT HE
WILL SUCCESSFULLY RESIST EFFORTS TO INITIATE A COUNTER-
TERROR CAMPAIGN. RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE DEMONSTRATED
LAUGERUD'S SENSITIVITY TO HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS.
IN A MAJOR SPEECH IN EARLY JULY TO THE GUATEMALAN CONGRESS,
LAUGERUD MADE THE UNUSUAL OBSERVATION, FOR A CONSERVATIVE
PRESIDENT, THAT VIOLENCE IN GUATEMALA HAS ITS ROOTS IN
SOCIAL INJUSTICE. HE ALSO PLEDGED TO RESPECT THE POPULAR
WILL IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS.

6. RE THIRD SENTENCE, WE WONDER WHETHER, IN VIEW OF RECENT
DEVELOPMENTS, THIS APPROACH REMAINS REALISTIC.

7. AS LONG AS THE GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION DOES
NOT DETERIORATE, AND IF THE BELIZEAN SITUATION EASES

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SIGNIFICANTLY, WE BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO
APPROVE NORMAL COMMERCIAL MILITARY SALES AND
PRE-FY 78 FMS TO GUATEMALA. WE SHOULD DO THIS NOT WITH A
VIEW TO RETURNING TO A MONOPOLY POSTION, BUT TO SHOW THAT
WE DO VALUE A CONTINUING OFFICIAL RELATIONSHIP AND ARE NOT
TRYING TO ISOLATE GUATEMALA, AND THAT WE HAVE NOT TAKEN
SIDES ON THE BELIZE QUESTION.

8. ... COSTS WHICH HAVE BEEN WEIGHED.
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